Yellow Starthistle *Centaurea solstitialis* L.

Identification:
This annual plant grows a stiff upright branched stem from a taproot. The basal rosette has deeply lobed leaves with pointed tips, while upper leaves are entire (un-lobed) and sharply pointed. Plants vary in size depending on conditions – during a drought year they may be as small as 4 inches tall with only a few seedheads. Typically, with adequate moisture, they will grow 2-3' tall. Flowering usually occurs from June to August, occasionally later on moist sites. Flower easily identified by stiff, sharp spines – up to 1" long. These spines make the plant distinctive and easy to identify.

Potential Damage:
This plant is a nightmare. Millions of acres in Montana, Idaho, and California have been infested and/or taken over by this highly vigorous plant. It takes over entire sites by out-competing native plants and grasses. It will eliminate forage and habitat for livestock, deer, elk, and other wildlife. Possibly poisonous to livestock, causing fatal "chewing disease" in horses. Its presence increases runoff and damage to stream systems and fisheries. Seeds may remain viable in the seed bank for up to 10 years.

Control and Prevention:
Take care not to drive or walk through infested areas. Stop and inspect vehicle between patrol units. MARK infested sites with <u>bright pink or orange</u> flagging. MARK SITE on map and provide to Refuge Operations Specialist **immediately** upon return from field. Constant effort, annually, during spring and fall growing seasons is necessary to prevent spread of this plant. Yellow star thistle is a Class B noxious weed in Washington state and land owners/managers are legally required to prevent the spread of this plant.

Current Status on the Hanford Reach National Monument:
Known areas of infestation are on the Wahluke Unit Ringold area. One individual plant was found on ALE in the road bed. **Please be aware and look for this plant everywhere, but especially when on Wahluke and when driving on ALE.**